Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

Media Contact: Nedra Darling, OPA-IA Phone: 202-219-4152
For Immediate Release: August 1, 2008
Print PDF

WASHINGTON – Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy and Economic Development – Indian Affairs George T. Skibine today offered praise for the installation and activation of the first large-scale wind turbine to be located on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. The turbine, which is owned by radio station KILI-FM and was funded in part by the Office of Indian Energy and Economic Development, was activated at a noontime ceremony yesterday in Porcupine, S.D. Skibine was represented at the July 31 event by IEED Division of Economic Development Director Jack Stevens and DED Policy Analyst Victor Christiansen.

"The KILI radio station plays a vital role on the Pine Ridge reservation as a news and information provider," Skibine said. "With the electric power and revenue potential this wind turbine offers, KILI will continue to serve its community, and Indian Country, as 'The Voice of the Lakota Nation.' I am proud that we have helped to make the KILI wind turbine a reality."

The Pine Ridge reservation is home to the 42,357-member Oglala Sioux Tribe and is located in an area of the United States with wind speeds in excess of 18 miles per hour. Great Plains wind power is estimated to have the potential for generating 535 billion kilowatt-hours per year – in comparison, the total U.S. electric generation in 2004 was 3,853 billion kWh – yet much of the region's wind power has remained undeveloped. The 72-foot high, 65-kilowatt wind turbine will power KILI, which is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year, and generate revenue for the station through the sale of surplus electricity to back to the grid.

The IEED provided the final $50,000 towards the turbine's purchase and installation price of $150,000. Given the radio station's importance as an economic hub for both the Pine Ridge and neighboring Rosebud Sioux reservations, the IEED also provided $106,000 for a program to train OST and Rosebud Sioux tribal members in wind turbine installation, repair and maintenance. The KILI wind turbine is expected to produce 92,000 kWh of power per year with an estimated savings to the station in utility costs of $12,000 per year.

In addition to Stevens and Christiansen, attendees included John Yellow Bird Steel, President of the Oglala Sioux Tribe and members of the Oglala Sioux Tribal Council, Melanie Janise, KILI Station Manager, Ellie Wicks, Constituent Services Representative for U.S. Senator Tim Johnson, Jesse Ewing, Constituent Services Representative for U.S. Senator John Thune, Pat Spears, President of the Intertribal Council on Utility Policy (ICOUP) and Saye Brown of Honor the Earth. The Secretary of the Interior created the Office of Indian Energy and Economic Development to encourage economic development in Indian Country. The IEED's mission is to foster strong Indian communities by creating jobs, Indian-owned businesses, and a trained workforce, and by developing Indian energy and mineral resources, and increasing access to capital. The IEED believes that thriving economies and opportunities for work are the best solutions to Indian Country's economic and social challenges.

-DOI-